Communes for Grownups

Looking for the ideal place to retire? Create it yourself

By Ben Brown

Five years ago, Arthur Okner retired early from his New York City marketing career and headed to Boulder, Colo., with its university town ambiance and mountain valley geography. But almost immediately, he began second-guessing himself.

"I was lonely," says Okner, now 62. "I didn't realize how social I was until I moved."

He discovered a solution in a "cohousing" development, a concept that has growing appeal. "I immediately fell in love with this idea," says Okner, who lives in one Boulder cohousing project and helped plan two others. "I found myself part of a community even before anything was built."

In cohousing, the residents themselves plan their communities and choose the appearance. They own their own units and divide duties for maintenance, gardening and other chores. And they rotate responsibilities for fixing meals that are shared two or three times a week in a community building.

It may be an idea whose time is at hand. With the largest pre-retirement generation in history approaching decisions about the rest of their lives, more people are asking, Why wait for somebody else to create a community that feels right to us?

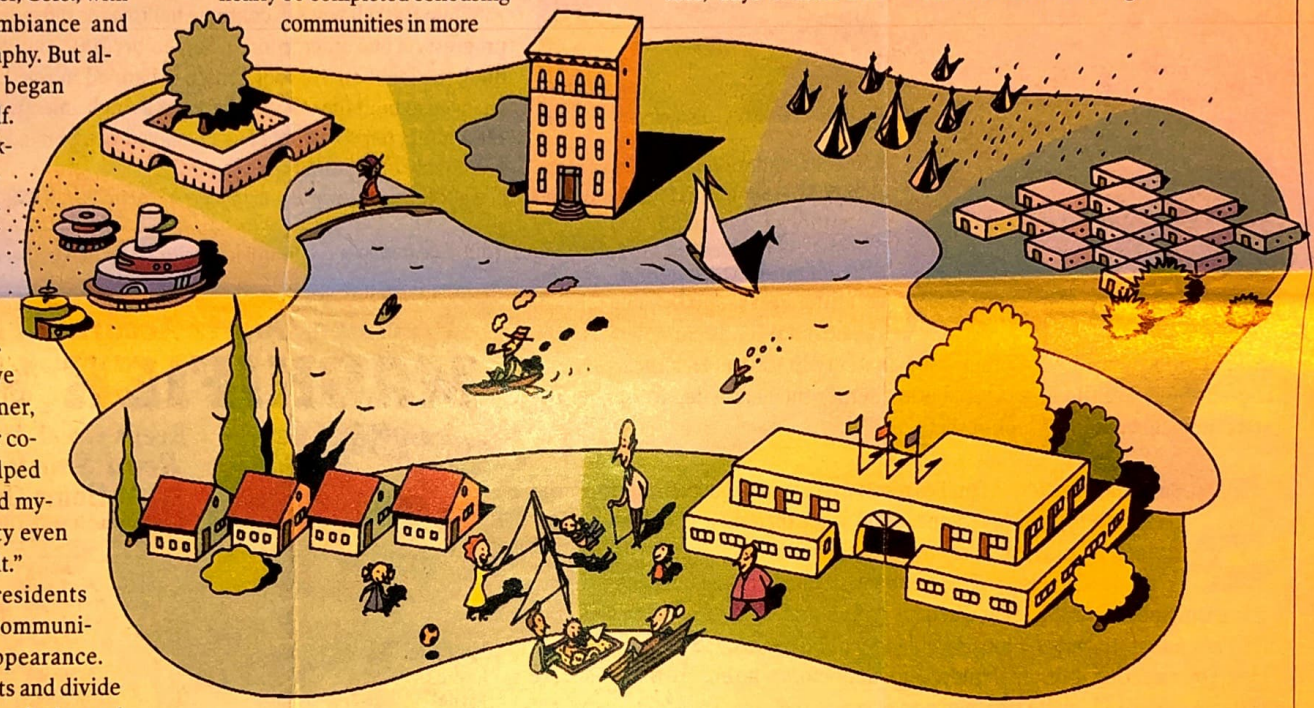
Twenty-two percent of the 500 respondents 50 to 65 to a poll conducted by MetLife Mature Market Institute and AARP last spring said they would be interested in "building a new home to share with friends that included private space and communal living areas."

"People are just jumping on this idea," says Sandra Timmermann, director of MetLife Mature Market Institute. "If you move into a group setting, you may not have lots in common. But if you form your own community, you can pick your friends and your interest areas. I think, as time goes on, this will be a preference for more people."

More than 5,000 people reside in nearly 80 completed cohousing communities in more than 30 states, according to the Cohousing Association of the United States, the movement's umbrella nonprofit organization. At least 100 more communities are in various stages of development. The sizes range from half a dozen units on a fraction of an acre in the city of Oakland, Calif., to 22 units on 260 rural acres in Hartland, Vt.

Most are intergenerational communities that are already an attractive option for people 50-plus, who make up approximately one-third of the residents in existing cohousing communities. They can be valued as surrogate grandparents and elder advisers. "They honor me here because of my age," says Rosetta Neff, 88, who moved with her daughter to Earthaven, a multigenerational community near Asheville, N.C. "I really didn't know what to expect, but it's better, in many ways, than I imagined."

The latest trend, though, is cohousing exclusive to people ages 55-plus. At least three such communities will open in the United States in the next two years. And in Denmark "20 of the last 25 cohousing projects have been for seniors," says Charles Durrett, the Berkeley, Calif., architect who helped import the concept from Denmark in the mid-1980s.



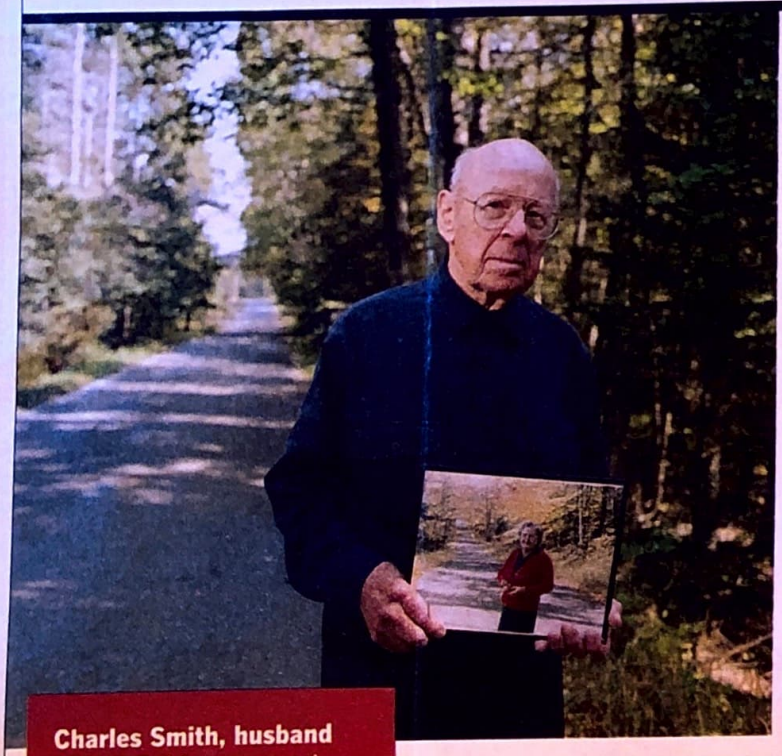
A cohousing community is more condo than commune, but with a twist. The relationships between buyers and developers are reversed. First comes the buy-in by would-be neighbors, then at least two years of building relationships, working out community rules and cooperatively designing the community they'll share.

Cohousing is not necessarily cheaper than conventional condos, especially if the community wants custom-design elements and a lavish community house. Land costs are a crucial factor, too. In rural Abingdon, Va., where a group of former nuns and their friends are building a 29-unit community known as ElderSpirit, they offered two-bedroom homes under 1,000 square feet for $114,000. But in Boulder, with its soaring housing market, Arthur Okner's 16-unit Silver Sage Village offers its smallest two-bedroom units at $353,000. (There will be discounts, however, for those who can meet asset and income qualifications for local affordable housing.)

Because of the attention to design, supporters say, there's likely to be long-term savings in cohousing through energy efficiency and cooperative living arrangements. Neighboring households may share a car, for instance.

The most popular arrangement may turn out to be a cohousing neighborhood in an urban center or adjoining a mixed-use development. That way, residents get a little quiet in the common spaces and a little time with peers without isolating themselves from a larger, more diverse community. ElderSpirit in Virginia, which is scheduled to open next year, is within walking distance of Abingdon's historic

INGO FAST



Charles Smith, husband
His wife Polly's cancer went undetected until it was too late because follow-up tests were never prescribed. So Smith worked to have more nondoctors placed on Maine's medical licensing board.

Gibson, a senior program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and co-author of *Wall of Silence: the Untold Story of the Medical Mistakes That Kill and Injure Millions of Americans* (Lifeline Press, 2003). "The CEO of the hospital sends condolences," she says. "A letter to the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations goes in a file. It's a crapshoot whether the health department or the state medical board will look at their case."

Sometimes, frustrated families resort to costly malpractice suits to avenge the death of their loved ones. And some turn their anger into action, trying to change the system and to slow the wave of medical errors.

David Shipp is a retired textbook salesman from Louisville, Ky., who was suspicious of wrongdoing when his wife, Doris, 70, died of colon cancer in 1999 after an initial misdiagnosis of bladder abnormality. He asked a Peer Review Organization, a group of independent doctors who ensure that Medicare patients receive adequate treatment, to examine the case. Two doctors refused to disclose the results of the review, and Shipp received a letter saying only that the PRO would take any necessary action if warranted.

Shipp sought the help of Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy group in Washington. In 2001 the group successfully challenged Medicare's policy allowing doctors to block the release of review findings in federal District Court, and the U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the ruling. Medicare beneficiaries can now file complaints with state quality improvement organizations, the new name for PROs.

In Massachusetts, John McCormack was devastated by the death of Taylor, his 13-month-old daughter, when doctors at a local hospital failed to perform timely surgery that would have relieved swelling on her brain. He waged a campaign to allow the families of those who died from medical errors to be represented in their cases before the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine, which disciplines doctors. Last spring the legislature finally approved such representation over objections from the Massachusetts Medical Society.

Charles Smith of Deer Isle, Maine, pushed for more lay people on the state Board of Licensure in Medicine to assure that doctors in medical error cases are appropriately disciplined; his efforts were in vain. His wife, Polly, 73, had died of ovarian cancer 39 days after diagnosis. She'd had abdominal pains for years, and a radiologist who performed a CT scan three years before her death wrote that he could not rule out the possibility of an ovarian tumor. No more tests were done. "I note with great regret that the diagnosis never occurred to me," Polly's doctor said.

As for Helen Haskell, Lewis Blackman's mother, she's playing the waiting game. For more than a year she's been fighting to get a modest bill enacted in South Carolina that would require hospitals to display the ranks of medical personnel on name badges, to explain their roles in a patient's care and to give families an emergency number to call if they believe their patient is not getting proper medical attention. But the South Carolina Hospital Association has managed to stymie the proposal, calling it burdensome to hospitals. "We support the intent of the bill," says Patti Smoake, vice president of the group. "We want to make sure hands aren't tied, so staffing problems aren't created."

While Haskell vows to continue fighting for safe hospital care, there has been progress on one other front: In September 2002, two years after her son, Lewis, died, the label on Toradol, which is banned in five European countries, was changed to limit the use in children to a single injection—that's just 2 percent of the amount her son would have received had he lived long enough to finish the full course of treatment. ■

For black-and-white reprints of this article, call (800) 635-7181, ext. 8158.

Sound Off—*What do you think should be done to stop medical mistakes? We'd like to to hear from you. Please send your ideas (no more than 125 words) online to www.aarp.org/bulletin or to Sound Off on Mistakes, AARP Bulletin, 601 E St. N.W., Washington, DC 20049.*

TRUDY LEIBERMAN *is a health journalist based in New York.*

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Resources

For more information, contact the Cohousing Association of the United States: Elder Cohousing Communities, 1460 Quince Ave., #102, Boulder, CO 80304. Phone: (800) 213-9993. Web: **www.eldercohousing.org**.

Also check out the websites of Silver Sage Village (**www.silversagevillage.com**) and ElderSpirit Community (**www.elderspirit.net**).

To see the latest projects by U.S. cohousing founders Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett, visit **www.cohousingco.com**.

And for practical advice on planning your own community, read Diana Leafe Christian's book *Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities*.

downtown. The Silver Sage community in Boulder, slated to open in 2006, is adjacent to a larger, just-completed cohousing development called Wild Sage. And both, in turn, are subsections of new mixed-use communities.

Demography alone—an aging population in both Europe and North America—is swelling the potential customer base for cohousing. But there's also the appeal of self-reliance. Given its requirement for homeowner participation, even before there are homes, "cohousing is housing for the ultraresponsible," designer Durrett says. That gives it cachet among those determined to take as much control as they can of the remaining years of their lives, to achieve independence without isolation, to build community on their own terms.

The first to embrace cohousing are often teachers, spiritual leaders, mental and physical health workers, artists, writers and others who see themselves as self-starters. They are the kind of people, says Durrett, "who want to grapple consciously with aging rather than allow themselves to be victims."

John Lightburn, an 83-year-old retired psychiatrist who lives with his wife in the Harmony Village cohousing community in Golden, Colo., says, "One of the defects of our modern society is its failure to encourage us to share with one another, to help and to be helped. I knew so many people who ended up in senior facilities all alone. Their children were all away. I always hoped I wouldn't end up in a place like that."

With the famously independent baby boomers in the retirement pipeline, that sentiment—and the market for do-it-yourself approaches—can only grow. So the cohousing pros are getting ready. Durrett is working on a manual for elder cohousing to supplement the 1988 handbook, *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*, that he co-wrote with Kathryn McCamant. The ElderSpirit residents intend to use their community as a model to help others. And across the country, architects, builders and finance specialists with cohousing experience are offering their services. The Cohousing Association of the United States is planning two seminars in 2005 to showcase the expanding networks.

Cohousing is not for everybody. Prospective residents have to be prepared to talk about community plans for two years or more before buildings start going up. They have to be prepared to make decisions by group consensus rather than through top-down hierarchies and majority-rules votes. And if it's a community for people 50-plus, they should be prepared for frank discussions about aging and death—including practical matters, such as what to do when residents can no longer take care of themselves—which may be uncomfortable for those who want to think only of active living.

The first to embrace cohousing 'want to grapple consciously with aging rather than allow themselves to be victims.'

Still, says Okner, cohousing is "the answer to my need for community. I see people. I know I'm alive. I know I'm appreciated. I feel so lucky to have fallen into this in the last quadrant of my life." ■

BEN BROWN *is a freelance writer in Asheville, N.C.*

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National

February 27, 2006

Growing Old Together, in New Kind of Commune

By PATRICIA LEIGH BROWN

DAVIS, Calif., Feb. 23 — They are unlikely revolutionaries. Bearing walkers and canes, a veritable Merck Manual of ailments among them, the 12 old friends — average age 80 — looked as though they should have been sitting down to a game of Scrabble, not pioneering a new kind of commune.

Opting for old age on their own terms, they were starting a new chapter in their lives as residents of Glacier Circle, the country's first self-planned housing development for the elderly — a community they had conceived and designed themselves, right down to its purple gutters.

Over the past five years, the residents of Glacier Circle have found and bought land together, hired an architect together, ironed out insurance together, lobbied for a zoning change together and existentially probed togetherness together.

"Here you get to pick your family instead of being born into it," said Peggy Northup-Dawson, 79, a retired family therapist and mother of six who is legally blind. "We recognized that when you're physically closer to each other, you pay more attention, look in on each other. The idea was to share care."

The four couples, two widows and two who are now living solo live in eight individual town houses, grouped around an inner courtyard. Still under construction is the "common house" with a living room and a large kitchen and dining room for communal dinners; upstairs is a studio apartment they will rent at below market value to a skilled nurse who will provide additional care. It is their own self-styled, potluck utopia.

"It's an acknowledgment that intimacy doesn't happen by chance," said John Jungerman, 84, a retired nuclear physicist and one of several Ph.D.'s in the group, who is perpetually clad in purple socks and sandals.

"At first John said, 'I'm not old enough,' " his wife, Nancy, said of the commune. "I said, 'You're 80 years old. How old do you have to be?' "

There are about a dozen co-operative housing developments for the elderly in development, from Santa Fe, N.M., to St. Petersburg, Fla., a fledgling movement to communally address "the challenge of aging non-institutionally," said Charles Durett, an architect in Nevada City, Calif., who imported the concept he named co-housing — people buying homes in a community they plan and run together — from Denmark in the late 1960's.

Though communal housing for the elderly is new, intergenerational communities have been around since 1991, when the first opened in this politically progressive university town. There are now 82 across the country.

In Abingdon, Va., residents are beginning to move into ElderSpirit, a development founded by a 76-year-old former nun, Dene Peterson. The community of 37, 10 years in the making, includes a "spirit house" for ecumenical prayer and meditation.

"I just thought there had to be a better way for older people to live," said Ms. Peterson, who formed a nonprofit development corporation with three other former Glenmary sisters, a Catholic order, and knit together a variety of private and governmental funds (16 of the 29 units are subsidized affordable housing).

Ms. Peterson says she was haunted and inspired by her work with elderly public housing residents in Chicago in the 1960's.

"The elderly were dying," she recalled, "and they were anonymous."

With millions of baby boomers moving toward retirement, gerontologists and developers are looking to communal housing for the elderly with growing interest, building on a generation's mythology that already includes communes and college dormitories.

In co-operative housing, said Janice Blanchard, a gerontologist and housing consultant in Denver, "the social consciousness of the 1960's can get re-expressed." Baby boomers, she predicted, "are going to want to recreate the peak experience of their lives. Whether a commune or a college dorm, the common denominator was community."

Rich Morrison, 79, a retired psychologist from Sacramento State University and the sole single man at Glacier Circle, only recently gave up his hobby, swimming the major rapids of the Colorado River. "Emotionally, there's no reason why I can't continue to grow until I'm 100, if I'm lucky," he said.

Mr. Morrison is once widowed and twice divorced. Like others in the group who have struggled through every loss, from a child's suicide to the death of a spouse, he speaks about now being able to make "heart choices," hard won.

"I've been lonely," said Lois Grau, 87, whose husband died three years ago. "Little things go wrong that he would

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2006

CO-HOUSING

Colorado

As the generation that created the commune craze heads into retirement, its members are beginning to build "co-housing" developments—a concept borrowed from Denmark in which residents have their own private townhouses or condos but share a central "common house." Nearly 200 co-housing developments have been started in the U.S. since 1991. Now, at least two such developments specifically targeted to older people have opened their doors, in southwestern Virginia and Northern California. And a third is under way in Colorado that could become the model for "elder co-housing" around the country.

Silver Sage Village, in Boulder, Colo., now under construction, plans to have a meditation room on the main floor of its common house where acupuncturists, massage therapists and other healers can work. The common house also will have a craft room, sitting room and media room—a luxury some multigenerational communities forgo because of parents' concerns about children watching television unsupervised. The development sits next door to a multigenerational co-housing community with which it already has close ties. That's the model that a small band of co-housing consultants and architects expect to take hold, because the younger residents can help provide neighborly support to their elders—and move next door as they age, if they so desire.

Annie Russell, Silver Sage's coordinator, lives next door at Wild Sage Co-housing. In the new development, 25 people will be living in 16 households. "There's a desire on our part to have a really close-knit community," she says. "You're committing to be there for each other in need, and that takes a pretty intense relationship."

Co-housing isn't necessarily an economical option. Units at Silver Sage, situated on prime Boulder land, start around $400,000. Six homes were set aside as "affordable"—about $119,000 or $140,000 apiece—for which Colorado residents are most likely to qualify. Applicants currently must have annual income of roughly $35,000 or less to qualify for the $119,000 units and $45,000 or less for the $140,000 units. In Abingdon, Va., where a group of former nuns sparked the formation of ElderSpirit Community, with 29 cluster homes and apartments, prices were kept in the $100,000 range by searching for a bargain-basement land price and winning state grants.



Co-Housing Groundbreaking in Boulder

At a gathering this summer in Asheville, N.C., of 135 architects, developers, academics and retirees interested in elder co-housing, a troubling question was raised: What happens if too many residents become frail at the same time? Since the concept is so new, there's no firm answer. Zev Paiss, a consultant who specializes in elder co-housing, says the experience in Denmark, so far, has been that residents' needs have been staggered enough that their neighbors can juggle the help.



Many more informal, communal arrangements could come about as well, especially among divorced and widowed women friends who buy a house together with an extra room for a home-care worker if needed—or a chauffeur, says Sandra Timmerman, director of the MetLife Mature Market Institute in Westport, Conn., who has kicked around the idea in her own social circle.

Co-housing's biggest advantage could be the sense of community it creates and the isolation it helps its residents avoid as they grow older, says Ron Manheimer, executive director of the North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement, who organized the conference in Asheville.

"The whole idea that your neighborhood is your community hasn't been the case for an awful long time for a lot of people," he says. "Clearly, that seems to be part of the expectation for co-housing: that people could be living in a more intimate way."

THE NATION'S NEWSPAPER

USA TODAY

NO. 1 IN THE USA . . . FIRST IN DAILY READERS

Communes grow up

Co-housing developments meet needs of the '90s



By Michael Schwarz, USA TODAY

In Georgia: Members of the Lake Clair Co-housing Community in Atlanta break bread in their common house. Residents take turns preparing the weekly dinner.

'First, it was the commune of the '60s and then the extreme opposite in the '80s. Now, we're somewhere in the middle.'

— Kathryn McCamant, author of *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach To Housing Ourselves*



By Michael Madrid, USA TODAY

In Colorado: The Bayless family heads to a potluck in the Greyrock Common community in Fort Collins.

COVER STORY

Residents share values, sense of community

By Haya El Nasser
USA TODAY

ATLANTA — Nancy Lowe bangs on a pot to announce dinner. Residents of the Lake Claire Co-housing Community, milling about the spacious community house, line up for their weekly communal meal while children play in the common courtyard. On the menu this Sunday: brown rice, tofu salad and stir-fried vegetables.

The scene is very '60s, from the vegetarian meal to the Birkenstock sandals and community house. But this is not a hippie commune. Lake Claire is one of a growing number of co-housing developments that are the new communes of the '90s.

Since the nation's first co-housing community was built in Davis, Calif., in 1991, 30 more have opened in urban, suburban and rural areas in 12 states. More than 150 are being planned in every region of the country.

These subdivisions of homes and townhouses are attracting people who yearn for a sense of community, a return to love-thy-neighbor philosophy and an environmentally conscious lifestyle. Co-housing residents are suburbanites and urban dwellers, old and young, middle-class and well-to-do. One reason co-housing is catching on is the nation's growing

Please see COVER STORY next page ▶



By Michael Schwarz, USA TODAY

In Georgia: Nancy Lowe Green fills in the menu board

Co-housing projects designed to foster community

Continued from 1A

number of single households. Single parents count on neighbors to watch the children. Single men and women find companionship. Older empty-nesters get help around the house. And everyone feels more sheltered from crime.

What is unique about co-housing is the way the developments begin. Usually a small group of people who want to live in co-housing take steps to build one in their community.

COVER STORY

They either pool their money to buy land or find a developer who owns land and will build a co-housing community they design with the help of an architect. Often they recruit buyers. The latest trend is developers who are building co-housing communities on their own without potential buyers. But critics say that's not the true spirit of co-housing, in which residents have a say in every step of the development.

Most co-housing residents are professionals. They're people who can afford to come up with a down payment sometimes as early as four years before they can move in to their homes. Down payments usually are 10% of the price.

Conceived in Denmark in the 1970s, co-housing is intentionally designed to create a village ambience. Front porches and balconies face a Main Street of sorts. The only way to get from the parking lot to the front door of each home is to walk past neighbors' homes.

"In most communities, you flip on the garage-door opener and slip inside without having to say 'boo' to your neighbor," says Don Lindemann, editor in chief of the *Cohousing* journal in Berkeley, Calif.

Pedestrian walkways criss-cross the courtyard and playground, and they all lead to the centerpiece of the complex: the common house. Equipped with a large kitchen, laundry room, play room, workshop and a big family room, the common house is the soul of co-housing. That's where group meals are held and where residents pick up their mail, do laundry or just hang out when they want company.

Gerald Celente, head of the Trends Research Institute in Rhinebeck, N.Y., expects co-housing-style communities to prosper in 2000 and beyond "when home-alone households" will outnumber the traditional all-American family. People living alone made up 25% of all households in 1996, up from 17% in 1970, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. And the number of one-parent families almost tripled in that period to 9.3 million.

"Co-housing is an extended family," says Greg Ramsey, a resident of Lake Claire, where half of the units are occupied by single women, some with children, and the rest by married couples and families.

"It doesn't have to be a spiritual or religious ideal to tie it together but strictly a common value for shared community and fraternity."

Ramsey, 39, works with Preston & Associates, an Atlanta architectural firm that designed Lake Claire. The complex of 12 town homes is on less than one acre in a gentrified, bohemian neighborhood near downtown Atlanta. The residents are teachers, actors, social workers, artists and computer systems engineers.

"First, it was the communes of the '60s and then the extreme opposite in the '80s. Now, we're somewhere in the middle," says Kathryn McCamant, author of *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*, the 1988 book that fueled the trend in the United States.

Solid investment

Co-housing residents don't like their communities to be confused with the '60s communes. And indeed they're not. Residents own their own home or town house. They can sell at any time and to anyone. Prospective buyers are asked to attend several community meetings before they buy into the complex. But unlike a co-op apartment building, co-housing residents don't approve new members.

At Lake Claire in Atlanta, town homes run between $100,000 and $130,000 for units that are 1,000 to 1,600 square feet. But in tony suburbs of Boston and Santa Fe, where co-housing communities are popping up, homes can be 3,000 square feet and cost about $300,000.

Buying when a co-housing community is in the planning stages can be a good investment. The homes can be worth 20% more by the time they're ready to be occupied, say co-housing experts.

And resale does not seem to be a problem. Lake Claire opened in April and there's already a waiting list of people interested in the first unit that goes on the market.

In co-housing complexes the only area that's owned by everyone is the common space, which includes the common house. Every resident has a say in how the common space is used. The complexes rely heavily on shared resources, such as one lawnmower and one set of tools.

Recycling and energy conservation often are a key element. Even cooking duties are shared. At Lake Claire, residents take turns cooking the weekly group meal. Residents pay a monthly association fee of $80 for things such as landscaping and upkeep of the common house.

Privacy concerns

But co-housing is not for everyone. "It's not a way of life well-suited to extreme individualists," Lindemann says. Residents have to work a little to protect their privacy.

Warns Lake Claire resident Kathy Burke, 46: "If you're having a domestic problem here, people will know. If you're having a drinking problem, people will know. But they'll also provide you communal support."

Steve and Laurie Bayless and their two children moved into one of 30 homes at Greyrock Commons, in Fort Collins, Colo., a year after they bought into the community. Steve, an engineer, admits that he was a bit concerned about the lack of privacy. "But people are pretty sensitive to that issue, and there's definitely a place to retreat," he says.

Steve now raves about the communal spirit. Residents quickly formed a carpool when it came time for children to start summer school. When people are headed to the grocery or hardware store, they put a colored flag by their door, inviting neighbors to drop off their shopping lists.

Liz Mitchell Curtis moved out of her five-bedroom house on two acres of land in the upscale Buckhead section of Atlanta and into Lake Claire as soon as the youngest of her three children went to college.

"I couldn't stand one more minute of suburbia," says the 49-year-old divorced welfare case worker. "But I was afraid that everybody was going to be totally humorless here, too earnest. But they're just people who honor humanity over everything else and believe in doing the right thing."

When she wants to be alone, she locks her door for privacy. When she feels like chatting, she steps out the front door and bonds with the neighbors. The big difference here is that the neighbors are more likely to be like her. But Curtis still gets razzed by her 23-year-old son.

"He just thinks it's hysterical," she says.

"When he calls he'll ask if we're having a group hug."

Judy Baxter is 54 and a computer data analyst for the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health. She says she lived in a wonderful neighborhood in Minneapolis before moving to the Monterey Co-housing Community in St. Louis Park, a suburb of the city. The complex is eight apartments in a 1924 Georgian mansion and seven new townhomes.

In her old neighborhood, Baxter says she "worked very hard to build a relationship with my neighbors but then they would move or they would be too busy. People here are interested in having relationships."



Photos by Michael Schwarz, USA TODAY

Opened in April: At Atlanta's Lake Claire, town homes run between $100,000 and $130,000 for units that are 1,000 to 1,600 square feet.



Taste of community: Residents line up for a weekly communal meal. The meals are held in Lake Claire's common house.



Married, with co-housing: Actors Barry Stewart Mann and Sherry Mann Stewart paid $128,000 for their 1,400-square-foot unit.

CO-HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS ACROSS THE USA

Co-housing communities vary across the country. A sampling of some under construction:

- ▶ Cambridge, Cambridge, Mass., 41 town houses and apartments, 1.5 acres.
- ▶ Concord Oasis, Contra Costa County, Calif., mini complex of five homes.
- ▶ Two Echo, Brunswick, Maine, 27 homes, 70 acres.
- ▶ Solterra, West Durham, N.C., 40 solar homes, 20 acres.
- ▶ Nomad, Boulder, Colo., 11 homes, 1.4 acres, built around renovated historic playhouse.
- ▶ Taiga Community, Fairbanks, Alaska, 18 homes.
- ▶ Daystar Community, Tallahassee, Fla., 13 homes, 2.5 acres.
- ▶ South Whidbey, near Langley, Wash., 7 homes, 21 acres.
- ▶ Higher Ground, Bend, Ore., 29 homes, 5.3 acres.
- ▶ Faraway Ranch, Telluride, Colo., 20 homes, 1,000 acres.
- ▶ Cantines Island Coho, Cantines Island, N.Y., 12 homes.

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COHOUSING COMES OF AGE

By BETSY VIERCK

As the 21st century approached, free-spirited former nun Dene Peterson was thinking about retirement, but her preparation was not going well: She could not find retirement housing that she considered a viable option. Taking matters into her own hands, she decided to design a place that she could look forward to living in. Along with three other former members of the Glenmary Sisters, Petersen developed a retirement community dedicated to communal living and exploration of the human spirit. "These were the best parts of convent life," Petersen told an Associated Press reporter in 2004.

The group named their project The ElderSpirit Community, with its design based on the cohousing model. After five years of hard work, the community will open summer 2005 on a 3.7-acre site along the Creeper Trail in Abingdon, Va. The launching will mark two firsts: The community will be the first cohousing program in the United States developed exclusively for elders, and it will be the first residential community that has late-life spirituality as its primary goal.

Facing the same issues as Dene Peterson, Jim Leach and his wife, Brownie, decided to develop and move into Silver Sage Cohousing, which opened August 2005 in Boulder, Colo. Silver Sage is the third elder cohousing project in the United States and the first in Colorado. Leach, president of Wonderland Hill Development Company, is an engineer with more than 30 years of experience in the design, construction and development of sustainable housing. He has developed more than 15 cohousing communities in the past dozen years and is regarded in the cohousing field as a national leader in creating environmentally friendly, mixed-income housing combining quality design within communal neighborhoods. "We have seen firsthand the advantages of community living and how much more fulfilling it is to be connected with your neighbors, especially for people in their 60s."

PIONEERS

Petersen and Leach are pioneers in a new housing concept whose time has come: elder cohousing. This innovative type of housing is based on the established cohousing model, which aims to offer residents an old-fashioned sense of neighborhood. In cohousing, residents can get to know their neighbors, building a strong sense of community that is usually absent in today's cities and suburbs. Cohousing communities are designed and managed by their residents. They provide homeowners with the autonomy and the privacy of home ownership combined with the advantages of community living.

A typical cohousing community has 20 to 30 single-family homes along a pedestrian street or clustered around a courtyard. Virtually all cohousing communities have a shared common house that is the hub of activity. Residents can gather there for group meals, social activities and meetings. Often, residents of these communities have several optional group meals in the common house each week.

A workshop is another common facility. Chuck Durett, coauthor of *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (Berkeley, Calif: Ten Speed Press, 1993) said, "Instead of 35 houses and 35 power drills you have 35 houses and one power drill." The cofounder of the CoHousing Company, Durett added that cohousing developments may also have common barns and sheds, greenhouses, gardens, car-repair garages, athletic facilities, pools and other shared amenities. Like multigenerational cohousing, elder cohousing communities provide both privacy and community support to residents.

Cohousing began in Denmark in the late 1960s, and spread to North America in the late 1980s. The first cohousing communities were intergenerational. Age- targeted cohousing began about 20 years lat-

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er. Now, older people in Denmark live in more than 200 Danish elder cohousing communities, and about one-third of all cohousing in Denmark is for older adults. In contrast, elder cohousing in the United States is in the infancy stages.

AGING BOOMERS

Senior cohousing is an idea whose time has come because of its obvious appeal to aging boomers. For example, more than one-third of people ages 50 to 65 who responded to an AARP/MetLife poll conducted in 2004 said they were interested in or very interested in "a clustered living community, in a campus-like setting, that includes private space and public areas such as a dining room, kitchen, library, entertainment center and laundry facility."

Another likely outgrowth of elder cohousing, according to Neshama Abraham, cofounder of the Elder Cohousing Network in Boulder, Colo., is the potential social activism that can come when people of like minds see each other regularly and talk about political and social issues requiring attention either locally or nationally. In addition, when residents move into elder cohousing, they fully intend for this to be their last home unless they become so incapacitated they can no longer live in the community even with the assistance of a caregiver.

In the past year, elder cohousing groups have sprung up across the United States. Three communities are under construction: ElderSpirit in Virginia, Silver Sage in Colorado and Glacier Circle Senior Community in Davis, Calif. Each project is unique, reflecting its community members, the location and the financial profile of the group. For example, a group of elders from Pennsylvania is in the beginning stages of developing a cohousing project exclusively for equestrians. Also, several church groups are looking at cohousing as an attractive housing option: In Florida, a Catholic assembly, a Unitarian Universalist congregation and a Jewish renewal community have recently contacted the Elder Cohousing Network about developing cohousing projects.

NOT FOR EVERYONE

Cohousing is a welcome housing solution for many, but not all, elders. Age-targeted cohousing is generally designed for active elders ages 55 and older. Elders who want to contribute to their communities are particularly attracted to cohousing communities.

Cohousing experts say that surprisingly many people who are attracted to cohousing are introverts. For example, Gene Junk, a resident of Nyland Cohousing in Lafayette, Colo., is single and has no children. He said that he is an introvert who, left to his own devices, would be isolated and lonely in his later years. So he sought out cohousing. Junk said that he greatly enjoyed his time at Nyland, but he also misses city life, so he plans move to Silver Sage in Boulder, Colo., in the near future.

Junk added that as he thinks about getting older, he likes the idea of living in a small community like Silver Sage, with others who share concerns about aging that are similar to his. "I think it will be great to live in an urban environment, close to the local coffee shop, market and galleries that are part of the surrounding neighborhood," he said. "I hope that Silver Sage can also be a place for connecting with other active seniors in the area. I think the community's Common House will be a great neighborhood gathering place for shared meals, good discussion and music."

LONG-TERM CARE

One of the major issues facing the elder cohousing movement is how residents will handle long-term care if the need arises. "We really need to address how we are going to care for people," said Amy Abrams, a case manager with Elder Care Consultants, La Jolla, Calif., who attended a recent elder cohousing workshop. If the majority of residents in a particular community age in place at similar rates, the result could be a huge strain on community resources. At present, cohousing members must necessarily rely on community services.

People involved in the elder cohousing movement are actively discussing possible solutions. For example, Silver Sage members are considering setting aside a unit for caregivers to live in if the need arises. The community in Davis, Calif., has designated an apartment above the common house specifically for a couple who can help take care of the physical grounds and buildings, as well as provide cooking and home services for residents, all of whom are age 70 or older.

One attractive component of elder cohousing is the goal of offering a portion of the homes for sale at affordable rates. For example, the ElderSpirit community provides affordable housing through the federal Section 8 Homeownership Program. Subsidized homes start at $110,000. But, for individu-

als who are not eligible for low-income assistance, the costs for cohousing units are solidly in the middle class: Market-priced homes at Silver Sage start at $350,000.

GETTING STARTED

Like Dene Petersen and Jim Leach, Zev Paiss and Neshama Abraham, a husband-and-wife team, are pioneers in elder cohousing. Paiss and Abraham have worked with more than 25 cohousing neighborhoods around the United States and are founders of the Elder Cohousing Network. In March, 2005, they held their first Getting Started Workshop in Boulder, Colo. Attending were planners, developers, architects, case managers and other participants interested in developing elder cohousing projects in places from Pennsylvania to Hawaii to the Virgin Islands.

The three-day workshops provide the nuts and bolts of starting a cohousing community, including a tour of four completed cohousing communities and the basic steps involved in taking an elder cohousing project from vision to reality. One participant, Ellie Breslin, lived and worked in California's Silicon Valley for many years, juggling roles as wife, mother and psychotherapist. After her husband died, Breslin retired to New Mexico, where, along with 20 other elders, she is developing an elder cohousing project in Santa Fe.

Breslin summed up the feelings and attitudes of many of the founders and future residents of elder cohousing: "This is a wonderful time of my life. I feel younger every year, and living in a place that values generativity is very important to me," she says. Generativity, she explained, is the idea defined by late psychologist Erik Erickson that old people frequently focus their late-life energies on how to benefit future generations.

To learn more about elder cohousing, contact Abraham Paiss and Associates at (303) 413-8066; e-mail: *info@ElderCohousing.org*; website: *www.abrahampaiss.com/ElderCohousing/index.htm*. Also, contact the Cohousing Association of the United States, (314)-754-5828; website: *www.cohousing.org*. ❖

Betsy Vierck is an independent writer specializing in aging and health. She is author or coauthor of more than 15 books, most recently Aging: Lifestyles, Work, and Money *(Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2005).*

SPECIAL REPORT: THE COHOUSING ALTERNATIVE

As Americans ponder how to spend the last few decades of their lives, a growing number are turning to a housing model pioneered in Denmark. Cohousing allows a committed group of buyers and renters to form a close-knit community. Each home has its own kitchen and living space, but a common space serves as a focal point for meals and other shared activities. In this special report, OAR *contributing writer Chuck Dervarics examines cohousing as a new way to age in place.*

Cohousing Grows as Viable Option For Seniors Seeking Community

For Dene Peterson, living alone held little interest and moving to a retirement community seemed too expensive. "I wanted more of a purposeful life," the 75-year-old Abingdon, Va., resident, told *OAR.*

Now Peterson has a new calling – leading a "cohousing" project with independent living but where residents will often eat together and jointly manage the project.

Popularized in Denmark, cohousing communities are gaining a foothold here. Currently, 64 communities are in operation, says the Cohousing Association of the U.S., and most have an intergenerational emphasis where seniors make up about 30 percent of residents.

Fueled by the success of these programs, several developers are planning senior-only cohousing communities where residents can age in place with help from other residents while enjoying senior-friendly services and amenities.

Looking for Alternatives

"I think there really is a hunger for a meaningful lifestyle after retirement," said Peterson, director of Elderspirit, a senior cohousing community scheduled to open this summer in southwest Virginia.

Of Elderspirit's 29 units, 13 are market-rate homes for sale while the others are rental properties for individuals earning below the area median income of $29,000. The community is already filled, with single seniors representing about 70 percent of residents.

"We have a goal of mutual support and later-in-life spirituality," Peterson told *OAR,* though the spiritual emphasis is not necessarily religious. A common house will serve as a gathering place for meals, meditation and activities, and it will have four apartments that eventually may serve residents who cannot live so independently. "We will help each other stay here," she said.

Elder-only developments are a new trend in cohousing, which is going through a growth spurt on its own thanks to word-of-mouth endorsements and increased acceptance among local planning officials and developers.

Those who commit to cohousing strive for a balance between privacy and community, with a willingness to commit time and talent to build a close-knit environment, according to Joani Blank, a cohousing resident in Oakland, Calif.

"It's like an intentional neighborhood," she told *OAR.*

A Way to End Isolation

Built usually as townhomes or condominiums, cohousing developments have a structure and spirit of their own. Cars are generally parked on the periphery, as residents use sidewalks to get home, fostering an old-fashioned, neighborhood feel.

Although each unit has its own kitchen, residents also get together in a common space, where neighbors may take turns preparing the evening meal. The common space also may have a children's play area, laundry facilities, a library or an exercise room.

Most cohousing projects are intergenerational, and the environment allows many seniors to serve as surrogate grandparents, says Ann Zabaldo, a cohousing consultant and resident of Takoma Village Cohousing in Washington.

"Older Americans do very well in cohousing, as long as they're somewhat independent," she told *OAR,* citing an 86-year-old resident who gets help going to the grocery store but lives independently.

"It's not assisted living, but older Americans can live on their own a lot longer in this environment," she said. "You have to work really hard to be alone in this type of community."

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SPECIAL REPORT: THE COHOUSING ALTERNATIVE

Financing, Development Issues Pose Challenge in Cohousing

Financing and development are two of the greatest hurdles for cohousing projects, as sponsors of a new project in Virginia well know. So Elderspirit Director Dene Peterson used her social network to jump-start the process.

"I asked 50 friends to each loan me $1,000 so we could buy the land," she told *OAR*. But her creative approach didn't stop there.

Working through an Appalachian service organization, she received a $240,000, three-year grant from the Retirement Research Foundation in Chicago for other start-up costs. She allotted $100,000 for initial site development and hired two part-time employees to work on financing, recruitment and partnership issues.

Putting the Pieces Together

Five banks then lent $250,000 apiece for construction of 16 affordable rental units, she said. Once the project reaches completion, the group can pay off most of that loan with a $1.1 million federal HOME grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Then she found a committed core of 13 home buyers for the other units, with average prices of $90,000 for one-bedroom and $113,200 for two-bedroom homes.

It has been a lot of work, but creating cohousing projects has become easier. It used to take six to eight years to take a project from concept to completion due to skeptical zoning officials and lack of interest from developers, according to Joani Blank, a board member of the Cohousing Association of the U.S. and resident of Swan's Market Cohousing in Oakland, Calif.

"Most real estate developers don't spend much time thinking about building 10, 15 or 30 units. They want to build 200," she told *OAR*.

Now the rollout time is two to three years, largely because more partnerships hire consultants who gained valuable experience working on the groundbreaking projects, according to Neshama Abraham, a consultant from Boulder, Colo., who offers workshops on how to start a cohousing community. "You want professionals to have a role," she told *OAR*.

Elder-Only Model Still Being Tested

In Denmark, about half of the 400 cohousing projects are just for seniors. But the jury is out on whether Americans will want to join seniors-only facilities.

Elderspirit, an elders-only development in Abingdon, Va., that is set to open this summer, has sold all its owner-occupied units. But although two other programs are near completion, some predict elder cohousing will grow slowly.

"I think seniors like intergenerational programs," said Joani Blank, a board member at the Cohousing Association of the U.S. "They may not want to live with just older people."

"So many elders don't have grandchildren living near them," said Boulder, Colo.-based consultant Neshama Abraham, whose elderly neighbor often watches her children for an hour or two.

A newly planned development in Boulder, Colo., may combine the best of both worlds. A 14-unit seniors-only community, Silver Sage, will open across the street from Wild Sage, an intergenerational project. Each will have its own common house but ample opportunity for interaction.

The other issue is finding committed homebuyers willing to play an active role in the startup. This group does everything from setting the price of home deposits to picking the furniture in the common house. "You have to keep a core group of future residents engaged for a long time," Blank said.

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Joani Blank, Swan's Market Cohousing, (510) 834-7399, swans-info@swansway.com.

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The 10 Principles of Elder Cohousing

1. **Participatory Process.** Future and current neighbors are invited to participate in many aspects of the creation and the future social sustainability of their community. This includes membership building/marketing, common facility programming, effective meeting and communication skills training, social community building, and the development of guidelines for living in community.

2. **Shared Vision and Values**. The future residents spend time together crafting a collective vision statement and operating agreements which will guide the community through the development process and become the foundation for living together later on. Groups may be drawn together by a common interest in the arts, environmental sustainability or later life spirituality.

3. **Designed for Community**. The physical layout and orientation of the homes, common facilities, communnity garden, pedestrian paths and parking promote easy interaction among neighbors. Independent homes provide privacy balanced with ongoing opportunities for connection with others through planned weekly meals and spontaneous social activities.

4. **Designed for Aging in Place**. The private homes and shared common facilities are wheelchair accessible and can allow a resident to stay in his/her home should motor skills become compromised. Being close to medical facilities can make healthcare more accessible and affordable.

5. **Shared Common Facilities**. Common facilities such as the clubhouse or Common House are considered an extension of the resident's living room. The Common House is used for overnight guests, visiting healthcare professionals, meals, classes, exercise, social activities, meetings and as an outreach to the community at large. Outdoor recreation areas and community gardens are an integral part of the community and supplement the private residences.

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6. **Resident Management**. Cohousing communities are managed by their residents through their Home Owners Association (HOA). Members can choose to do the work themselves or they may choose to pay for outside suppliers and services, i.e. to prepare common meals cooked by residents in combination with meals prepared by an outside chef. Residents attend regular business meetings to develop policies and handle the business of the neighborhood.

7. **Collaborative Decision-Making**. Most communities make their decisions by consensus where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. This Quaker practice is underscored by the philosophy that "everyone has a piece of the Truth." Thus, even the quiet Elder has an equal voice in all decisions.

8. **No Shared Community Economy**. Except for monthly homeowner HOA dues, each household maintains its own financial affairs. Cohousing is not a commune where people pool their financial resources or derive their income from the neighborhood.

9. **Spiritual Eldering**. The coming together of Elders who live in close proximity in a self-managed empowering environment provides a setting conducive for contemplation, deep inner work, civic participation, social activism, mentoring children and adults, and pursuing one's personal path enhanced and supported by the company of others.

10. **Environmental Consciousness**. Residents of cohousing communities live a sustainable lifestyle on a neighborhood scale. Neighbors typically participate together in recycling, composting, sharing resources, driving less, growing and serving healthy food at community meals, living in smaller, clustered energy-efficient homes, consuming less water and electricity.

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2005 Elder Cohousing "Getting Started" Workshops

March 18-20 • June 24-26 • September 23-25 • Boulder, CO

This weekend workshop provides an overview of the basic principles of Cohousing based on 15 years of seniors living in multi-generational cohousing neighborhoods in the U.S. This is the most comprehensive training available for people interested in creating or supporting an Elder Cohousing community. We will provide practical steps for building an Elder Cohousing neighborhood and ample opportunities for networking and learning from others.



Neshama leading a "Getting Started" workshop in San Diego, CA, January 2004.

On Day One we will offer a **tour of five completed cohousing communities** in Colorado. On Day Two there will be an **overview of the cohousing development process**. On Day Three, Elder Cohousing developers and community members will present **case studies** for two very different age-targeted villages now under development - one urban, developer-led and mixed income; the other rural, resident-initiated and combining affordable homes to buy or rent.

The workshop is designed for both aging and development professionals as well as elders interested in starting a cohousing project in their area. The training will be led by experienced cohousing professionals **Zev Paiss** and **Neshama Abraham**, founders of the Elder Cohousing Network. The weekend will include additional presentations from the **ElderSpirit Community** in Abingdon, VA, and **Wonderland Hill Development Company,** developer of Silver Sage Village in Boulder, CO, and other guest presenters.

Workshop topics include:

- Creative Housing Options for Elders - The Unmet Need
- At the Beginning - What to do first?
- Developing a Core Group - Creating the foundation to work together
- Issues of Aging - Conversations about growing older together
- Locating a Site - Matching your vision with reality
- Marketing & Membership - Finding and connecting with your future neighbors
- Working With Professionals - Various options for a successful partnership
- Programming the Site - Balancing private & shared space, using "green" materials
- Designing the Neighborhood - Landscaping, gardens & common areas
- Selecting Your Home - Floor plans, options and upgrades
- Getting Financing - How will it all get paid for?
- Getting it Built - Working with the builder
- Moving In! - Living in Community.

Register at www.ElderCohousing.org
More information at (303) 413-8066 or email Info@ElderCohousing.org

There's a new kid on the block ...

... Elder Cohousing



The Elder Cohousing Option...

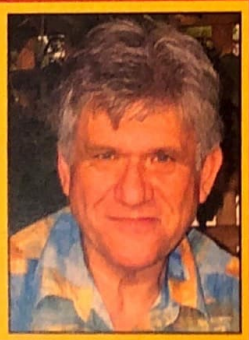
With the largest pre-retirement generation in history approaching decisions about the rest of their lives, more than half consider being in a community of family and friends as their top priority. By forming their own community, seniors can pick their friends, interest areas, and a housing design which balances privately-owned living space with communal areas for neighborhood meals, socializing, gardening and outdoor living. In response to this growing need, an innovative socially and environmentally sustainable housing option has recently emerged in the United States called **Elder Cohousing**.



This housing concept offers pro-active adults, 55 and above, the opportunity to live independently and "age in place" within a close-knit community of neighbors.

Since the Elder Cohousing model was first reported on in the *AARP Bulletin* (Nov. 2004) thousands of people have visited the **ElderCohousing.org** website seeking to learn more. Elder Cohousing groups are now forming across the nation. Two communities are already under construction in Virginia and California. A third age-targeted cohousing community for pro-active adults is being created by the group members in partnership with an experienced national cohousing developer in Colorado. Each project has a unique story based on the community members, their specific site and financial profile.

This new housing model, which was imported from Denmark where there are 200 completed senior cohousing neighborhoods, is quickly drawing attention from senior housing and aging experts and the media for filling an important and basic social need in our society - a need for a supportive community during the last phase of one's life while retaining one's creativity and independence. To support the new industry, the Elder Cohousing Network will be holding three comprehensive **"Getting Started" workshops** in 2005 in Boulder, Colorado. (Please see reverse side for details.)



*Arthur Okner, MSW founding partner, **Elder Cohousing Network**, is attending the A.S.A. conference. You can reach him at the Marriott Hotel or at **303-921-6489**.*

Reports on Elder Cohousing have recently appeared in *USA Today* (Jan. 17, 2005), the *Older American's Report* (Jan. 21, 2005) and in the upcoming issue of the *Journal of the Society of Senior Advisors* (Spring 2005).

For more information, please visit
www.ElderCohousing.org
or contact us at: (303) 413-8066 or
Info@ElderCohousing.org

Introducing Elder Cohousing



June 9, 2006 ribbon cutting at the ElderSpirit Cohousing community in Abingdon, VA.

With the largest pre-retirement generation in history now looking at the rest of their lives, more than half of our aging population considers being in a community of family and friends as one of their top priorities (AARP/Met Life Mature Market study). By forming a self-managed neighborhood, elders have control over their lives. They can pick their friends, interest areas, and a housing design which balances privately-owned homes with shared facilities. In response to this growing need, an innovative socially and environmentally sustainable housing option has recently emerged in the United States called **Elder Cohousing**. Cohousing homes designed for aging in place are both market rate and affordable, and can include rental units in a supportive neighborhood where the residents know each other *before* they move in. Common areas are created with member's input and can include a Common House for shared group meals, plus multi-purpose spaces for classes, artwork, exercise, health care services, overnight guest rooms for friends and family and rooms for visiting or resident health care providers, plus outdoor spaces for gardening and recreation.

This housing concept offers pro-active adults, 55 and above, the opportunity to live independently and "age community" within a close-knit group of neighbors.



Neshama Abraham Paiss co-founder of The Elder Cohousing Network

Since the Elder Cohousing model was first reported on in the *AARP Bulletin* (Nov. 2004) thousands of people have visited the **ElderCohousing.org** website seeking to learn more. New Elder Cohousing groups are forming across the nation. Two communities are already completed in Abingdon, VA and Davis, CA where residents have moved into their homes. A third age-targeted cohousing community for pro-active adults is being created in Boulder, CO and there are forming groups in 25 locations across the U.S.

According to Charles Durrett's new *Senior Cohousing* book, 20 of the last 25 cohousing projects in Denmark where cohousing originated were senior cohousing neighborhoods. The U.S. age-targeted cohousing concept is quickly drawing attention from senior housing and aging experts for filling an important and basic social need in our society - the need to be part of a caring non-institutional community during the last phase of one's life while retaining one's creativity, dignity and independence. Research has shone that a strong support group is as strong a predictor for preventing heart disease as not smoking.

To support this new industry, Zev Paiss and Neshama Abraham, co-founded *The Elder Cohousing Network,* which maintains a national database and offers a comprehensive **"Getting Started" Workshop** in Boulder, Colorado. Their next workshop will take place Thursday evening, **September 14** through Sunday noon, **September 17, 2006**.

For information or to register, please visit
www.ElderCohousing.org
call 303-413-8066 or email us at
Info@ElderCohousing.org



Zev Paiss leading the March 18-20, 2005 "Getting Started" workshop in Boulder, CO.

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An Elder Cohousing "Getting Started" Workshop

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The Elder Cohousing Option

Every day 10,000 people in the United States turn 59. A growing number of our active adult population are not satisfied with the housing options available for their later years. They are deciding that traditional nursing homes, assisted living facilities and institutional senior communities are not where they want to end up.

In response to this growing need in our country, an innovative environmentally-conscious housing option has emerged in America using a model imported from Denmark called Cohousing. Elder or Senior Cohousing offers active elders, 55 and above, the opportunity to live independently and "age in place" within a close-knit community of neighbors.

The Workshop

This weekend workshop provides a comprehensive overview of the basic principles of Elder Cohousing and will explain how to get started creating an age-targeted Cohousing Community in your area. The cohousing development principles also apply to intergenerational "elder-rich" cohousing whewre homes are accessile ad where the aging process is honored by the community. On Day One, we will offer a guided bus tour of several cohousing neighborhoods in Colorado. On Day Two, we will present an overview of the cohousing development process. On Day Three, Elder Cohousing developers and residents will present different options for creating age-targeted neighborhoods and personal experiences of life in these small-scale planned neighborhoods.



The March 2005 Elder Cohousing Workshop

Workshop topics include:

- Housing Options for Elders
- At the Beginning - What to do first?
- Developing a Core Group - Creating the foundation to work together
- Issues of Aging - Conversations about growing older together
- Locating a Site - Matching your vision with reality
- Marketing & Membership - Finding your future neighbors
- Working With Professionals - Several options for a successful partnership
- Programming the Site - Balancing private & shared space, using "green" materials
- Designing the Neighborhood - Landscaping, gardens & common areas
- Selecting Your Home - Floorplans, options and upgrades
- Financing - How will it all get paid for?
- Getting it Built - Working with the builder
- Moving In! - Living in Community.

The Workshop will be led by experienced cohousing professionals and 11-year cohousing residents Zev Paiss and Neshama Abraham, a husband and wife consulting team based in Boulder, CO. The weekend will also include presentations from Dene Peterson, the project manager of ElderSpirit Community in Abington, VA, and representatives from Siver Sage Village, an active adult cohousing neighgborhood in Boulder.

Workbook

Each participant will receive a 170-page 3-ring workbook, an invaluable resource for professionals and forming communities. This workbook contains a wide variety of sample documents, collected over a 15-year period. Sections include Forming a Group; Locating a Site; Marketing & Membership; Financing & Construction and Group Process. Documents in the workbook includes sample budgets, vision statements, levels of membership, site plans, the components of a feasibility study, and a marketing materials. The Getting Started Workbook sells separately for $150.

Registration

Standard Registration: The cost for all workshop sessions, the tour of Colorado cohousing communities, and five gourmet meals is $525 (includes the annual Elder Cohousing Network-membership fee of $15). We are also offering a reduced rate of $425 ($100 discount) for every additional person registering as part of a group. Please call us at **303-413-8066** to register by phone.

Workshop Location

The Workshop will be held at the Nomad Cohousing Common House 2 miles from downtown Boulder. All of our sessions and meals will take place in their meeting room or nearby restaurants accessible my mass transit.



Accommodations

All participants are encouraged to reserve a room at the Holiday Inn Express by calling their reservation desk at **303-442-6600.** Our block of rooms are being held under the name **Elder Cohousing**. We have secured a special corportate price of $86 per night for reservations made before **April 15**.



Note: If you would like to reduce your costs and share a room with another workshop participant, please let us know and we will help you find a compatible roommate. We cannot guarantee roommate placement.

Tour of Cohousing Communities

As part of our workshop we will be including a guided tour of five cohousing communities in the Boulder/Denver area. We will visit Harmony Village in Golden, Nyland Cohousing in Lafayette, Nomad Cohousing and Wild Sage and Silver Sage in Boulder. We will be given a private tour of each neighborhood by a resident elder of the community, along with a "fact sheet" describing each community. A healthy vegetarian or chicken box lunch will be provided.

Getting to Colorado

The closest airport for those of you flying into Colorado is Denver International Airport (DIA) approximately 50 miles east of Boulder. Two companies offer shuttle service between DIA and Boulder and are located on the baggage claim level at the airport.

• **SuperShuttle:** ($38/roundtrip) Leaves the airport every hour at 10 minutes past the hour. Tel: (303) 444-0808 **www.supershuttle.com**

• **Boulder Express**, ($20 one-way) Leaves the airport every 30 minutes. Tel: (303) 457-4646. **www.boulderexpress.com**

Schedule of Activities

Thursday, May 1, 2008

3:00 pm	Check into Hotel
5:00 pm	Meet at Nomad Cohousing
5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Introductions, Tour of Nomad, Workshop Overview
6:45 pm –	Group Dinner at Local Restaurant

Friday, May 2, 2008

8:00 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast at Nomad Common House
9:00 am	Board Tour Bus
9:15 am – 10:15 pm	Tour of Wild Sage & Silver Sage
10:45 pm – 11:45 am	Tour of Nyland
12:15 pm – 12:45 pm	Lunch at Harmony Village
12:45 pm – 1:45 pm	Tour of Harmony, Golden
2:30 pm	Return to Nomad
3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Afternoon Presentations
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm	Meet for Dinner Around Town

Saturday, May 3, 2008

8:00 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast at Nomad Common House
9:00 am – 12:30 pm	Morning Presentations
12:30 pm – 2:00 pm	Lunch at SpringHill Suites
2:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Afternoon Presentations
3:30 pm – 4:00 pm	Networking Break
4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	"Interest Group Topic" Meetings
5:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Free Time
6:00 pm – 8:30 pm	Meet for Dinner Around Town



Harmony Villlage in Golden, CO

Sunday, May 4, 2008

8:00 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast at Nomad Common House
9:00 am – 10:00 am	ElderSpirit Presentation
10:00 am – 11:00 am	Silver Sage Presentation
11:00 am – 11:30 am	Networking Break
11:30 am – 12:30 pm	Abraham Paiss Presentation
12:30 – 1:00 pm	Closing Remarks.

Workshop Presenters



Neshama Abraham Paiss

A native New Yorker and public relations professional, Neshama moved to Boulder, Colorado in 1996 where she met her future husband Zev Paiss and first learned about cohousing.

Since 1997, Neshama has authored dozens of articles and worked with many of the nation's major print and broadcast media outlets about cohousing. She is the National Press Contact for the Cohousing industry and helps educate the general public and the media about this supportive and environmentally sustainable lifestyle.

Through their business, Abraham Paiss & Associates, Neshama helps train group members as effective spokespersons for their community, coordinates media contact, writes and distributes press material, and guides the community in their marketing and membership building programs. She has helped cohousing groups in Arizona, California, Colorado, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Texas. Neshama has a BA Degree in Philospohy from Rice Universaty inHouston Texas where she competed on the women's tennis team.

Neshama lives in the Nomad Cohousing Community in Boulder, where she and Zev are raising their two daughters.



Zev Paiss

A native of Los Angeles, Zev has lived in cohousing since 1994. Over the past 14 years, he has become a nationally recognized cohousing consultant known for his expertise in Group Dynamics, Community Building and the Cohousing Development Process. Zev is a principal in Abraham Paiss & Associates, an independent business that helps cohousing communities get started. He has traveled across the United States assisting cohousing groups in California, Colorado, Arizona, Utah, North Carolina, Illinois, Florida and Texas.

Zev is the founding Executive Director of The Cohousing Association of the United States, a national non-profit organization he ran from 1998-2002. Since 1991, he has taught "Getting Started" workshops and delivered dozens of presentations and slide shows about creating cohousing neighborhoods and to both the generalpublic and to building and development professionals.

Zev is a National Spokesperson for the Cohousing industry and has been interviewed by many of the country's leading national print and broadcast media outlets about the sustainability benefits of living in a community setting. He is also co-founder of Support Financial Services a business which provides early stage financing to cohousing groups. Support has helped 15 cohousing neighborhoods get built since 1993.

Zev produced the 22-minute introductory cohousing video "Neighborhoods for People." He is currently producing a new cohousing video geared to professionals. Zev holds BA degrees in Biology and Environmental Planning from the University of California at Santa Cruz.

He was a founding member of the Nomad Cohousing Community in Boulder, where he has resided with his family since 1997.

Dene Peterson



Dene (Geraldine) Peterson is the Executive Director of Trail-view Development Corporation and the Project Director for the ElderSpirit Community in Abingdon, Virginia, where she has been a resident since February 2006. ElderSpirit is a 29-home mixed-income Elder Cohousing community with an emphasis on late life spirituality.

Dene oversaw all aspects of the construction process and obtained over $1,500,000 in grants to make the homes affordable to buy or rent. The neighborhood is the second completed Elder Cohousing in the United States.

Dene is a certified Housing Finance Development Professional and has a Masters Degree in Higher Education from the University of Michigan. She has been the administrator of non-profit organizations throughout her professional career. Dene has extensive experience in raising funds from public and private sources and has been highly successful in securing funds for ElderSpirit.

Jim and Brownie Leach

Jim and Brownie have been involved in the development of cohousing communities since 1991. Now, after completing 18 communities in four states, they have become residents in the Silver Sage Village and community in Boulder, Colorado for active adults. We will hear from them about their experiance as both developers and now residents in cohousing

